Report of the Accreditation Visiting Team

Butler Middle School 7530 South 2700 East Salt Lake City, Utah 84121

October 13-14, 2004



Utah State Office of Education

250 East 500 South P.O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

THE REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM REVIEWING

Butler Middle School 7530 South 2700 East Salt Lake City, Utah 84121

October 13-14, 2004

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

DIVISION OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND SCHOOL SUCCESS

Christine Kearl, Associate Superintendent

Brett Moulding, Director Curriculum and Instruction

Georgia Loutensock, Accreditation Specialist Curriculum and Instruction

Salt Lake City, Utah

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FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, October 13-14, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Butler Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Beverly Ashby is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Butler Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Butler Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

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|--|--|---|--|
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| Amy GoffBarbara Lynn | | School PsychologistCounselor | |
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BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Butler Middle School is to help every student by providing a positive learning environment so that all students:

- Have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential and progress academically.
- Explore and respect the world beyond themselves.
- Develop life skills for becoming responsible, productive citizens in a rapidly changing global society.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Student learning is the chief priority of the school and should be the primary focus of all decisions impacting the work of the school.
- Students learn in different ways. They should be provided with a variety of instructional approaches to support their learning. Students learn best when actively engaged in the learning process.
- Each student is a valued individual with unique physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs.
- Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community share the responsibility for advancing the school's mission.
- The commitment to continuous improvement by all stakeholders is imperative if our school is going to enable students to become confident, self-directed, lifelong learners.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Carolyn Schubach, Murray School District, Visiting Team Chairperson
Shannon Hoskins, Sand Ridge Junior High School, Weber School District
Craig Jessop, North Ogden Junior High School, Weber School District
Garrick Peterson, Lakeridge Junior High School, Alpine School District
Gregg Roberts, Churchill Junior High School, Granite School District
Debbie Sorensen, Murray High School, Murray School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT

BUTLER MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Butler Middle School is one of fifteen middle schools in Jordan School District and is located in the suburban Cottonwood Heights area of Salt Lake City. The school opened in 1965 with an enrollment of 1,053 students, and at its highest enrollment had over 1,600 students. The current enrollment in grades 7, 8, and 9 is 1,062. Currently there are 111 students receiving special education services, 13.57 percent of students are on free or reduced-price lunch, and 9.8 percent of students are of ethnic minorities. The school is experiencing declining enrollment. Butler Middle School has a teaching staff of 48 with a principal and two assistant principals.

Historically, Butler Middle School, along with the other middle schools in Jordan District, housed students in grades 6, 7, and 8, and initiated structures such as teacher teaming, advisory and other structures as part of the middle school program. In the 1987-88 school year, 9th grade students were moved to middle schools and 6th grade students were moved back to elementary schools, due to overcrowding in high schools. Since that time Butler Middle School has lost the middle school programming, and in the last three years the faculty and community have begun to explore ways to better meet the developmental needs of middle school students.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The administrative team and teachers have made a significant effort to collect and analyze student achievement data in the school. In particular the school analyzed mathematics data to note increasing levels of mastery overall, but achievement gaps in certain subgroups of students. Efforts have begun to identify students in theses subgroups and implement strategies to assist these students to be more successful. In science, the profile points out that 85 percent of seventh grade, 90 percent of 8th grade, and 84 percent of 9th grade students reached proficiency, excluding the 65 9th grade students enrolled in Biology who all achieved mastery. The analysis of science CRT data points out that a higher number of Hispanic and African-American students scored at partial mastery, and that the school and Science Department plan to pay close attention to these student populations, which are relatively new to the school. The Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) has emphasized reading for the past two years. The Gates-MacGinitie reading assessment was given as a pre- and post-test for all students during the 2002-03 school year, and the post-test scores for 2003 are being used as a baseline for the next school year. The test is administered to all grade 7 students and new students as a pretest each September. Teachers are provided with a list of "target"

students who score at or below a 5.0 reading level so that they can provide intervention and support for reading across all content areas. The profile noted "significant gains" during the 2002-03 and 2003-04 school years, with post-test scores in 2003-4 showing a 35 percent increase in the number of students testing at a 10.0 or above Grade Level Equivalent (GLE). 11.4 percent fewer students scored below 5.9 or below GLE. Target students at all three grade levels showed improvement.

Stakeholder perception surveys were administered to parents and students, but not to faculty members. Data was provided in the profile, but little analysis of the data was given.

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

Butler Middle School is strongly encouraged to continue its efforts to systematically collect and analyze student achievement data to guide the decisions made by the school. This effort should extend to include data not included in the profile, such as student attendance and discipline data and faculty perception data.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Continuing inquiry into reading achievement data is recommended. As teachers continue to implement reading strategies in content classrooms, continuing evaluation of those practices and their effectiveness are also recommended.
- The analysis of course grades, attendance, and discipline patterns should be incorporated into the school's comprehensive profile in the future.
- As the school more clearly refines its action plans to reflect the implementation of the DRSLs, it is recommended that the staff collect and analyze data on student achievement of the DRSLs.

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

a) To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?

The school went through an extensive consensus-building process to define the shared vision of the school. Interviews with parents and teachers indicated that the school community was invited to participate in the self-study process. The School

Community Council and faculty were actively involved in assisting the leadership in its collaborative efforts. The self-study has been the major focus of the school.

b) To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?

One of the major strengths of the document was the candor of the staff and community in their reflection. They did a thorough job of assessing the school in the department reports for classroom effectiveness. The profile brought to the surface issues that the staff agreed to be the main areas of focus.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Butler Middle School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

- 1. Lifelong learning
 - Initiates own learning
 - Achieves high standards of literacy and basic knowledge
 - Manages information
 - Demonstrates aesthetic awareness
- 2. Complex thinking
 - Demonstrates a variety of thinking processes
 - Integrates new information with existing information and experience
 - Applies thinking skills strategically
- 3. Responsible citizenship
 - Demonstrates individual responsibility and self-control
 - Practices a healthy lifestyle
 - Understands and promotes democratic values
 - Participates in activities that promote the public good
- 4. Effective communication
 - Uses appropriate methods to communicate with others
 - Listens and responds appropriately when receiving information

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

a) To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?

The faculty did the majority of the work in the collaborative effort to devise a mission statement that gives the school its purpose and direction. They did this by carefully discussing, analyzing, and redefining the previous mission statement. They worked together to make their current mission statement concise and clear. The mission statement was then presented to Community Council, PTSA, and Student Senate. Each of those groups approved the mission statement as written.

b) To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?

The belief statements reflect the commitment of the staff and administration of Butler Middle School to its students and their futures. The belief statements are well thought out, insightful, and progressive. Their commitment is to each student regardless of his or her background, current circumstances, and future goals. Individuality is valued and responsibility is shared among school staff, student learners, and community members.

c) To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?

The school's mission and beliefs focus on the student and his or her future. They reflect the community members' desire for their children to grow into mature, capable, responsible adults. These ideals lead directly into the school's desired results for student learning, (DRSLs): Lifelong Learning, Complex Thinking, Effective Communication, and Responsible Citizenship. Each of these goals not only affects students' current growth but encourages them to become the next responsible generation.

Curriculum Development:

a) To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?

There is evidence that the vast majority of teachers and departments have aligned their curricula with the Utah State Core Curriculum and national standards where applicable. Some collaboration is taking place between departments to integrate core concepts, but collaboration among staff occurs informally and is mostly based on interest. There is a desire by some staff members to collaborate on articulation and integration of curricula. The Visiting Team suggests that the staff continue to find time and methods for integrating core concepts across content areas and grade levels. Moving forward with teaming will support the focus on essential concepts while meeting individual student needs.

b) To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?

It is evident that there is a high degree of academic focus at Butler Middle School, yet the conversations about student learning are not yet reflecting the focus on the school's DRSLs. Increasing the schoolwide understanding of the DRSLs, and how to teach and assess for those DRSLs in all content areas, will provide the school community a with clear direction for curriculum and instruction. The school's focus on literacy is emerging, and by clarifying and refining the specific action plan steps connected to the DRSLs the school can bring about a more coordinated effort to implement the DRSLs across the curriculum.

Quality Instructional Design:

a) To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?

During classroom visits, the Visiting Team observed most teachers using a variety of teaching strategies, including hands-on activities, oral presentations, small group work, lectures, writing to learn, and class discussions. Both students and parents indicated that they are satisfied with the quality of instruction at Butler Middle School. The Visiting Team believes that the faculty and staff are hardworking, dedicated, and available to students and parents. The staff has expressed a desire to work more effectively across the departments to develop meaningful curriculum for all students. All teachers have studied content reading strategies, and some evidence in classrooms was observed. Continued study and implementation of best instructional practices will enhance student engagement in learning.

b) To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?

Butler Middle School effectively engages many students. However, the faculty and staff realize that minority and low socioeconomic groups are somewhat less engaged. The Visiting Team found some evidence that individual teachers monitor and adjust their instruction to address the different ability levels, from gifted to at-risk, found within a regular classroom setting. A closer departmental evaluation concerning differentiated instruction will help the faculty and school address this concern.

c) To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?

Butler Middle School provides its students with opportunities to access academic support for learning. Students reported that many teachers are available before and after school, and are happy to provide help with assignments or difficult concepts.

The Jump Start program is designed to assist students that are "at-risk." Every student's reading is assessed using the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test at the beginning of the year to establish his or her reading level. Those students testing at or below the fifth grade level are identified. Each teacher is given a list of these students. Counselors track the students through a fifteen-week program. The post-reading assessments indicate outstanding progress.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?

As the school continues in the school improvement process, it will evaluate student progress toward the DRSLs. The Visiting Team found some evidence of schoolwide assessments developed around the DRSLs. Because improved literacy is a schoolwide goal, reading assessments are done annually. All students take the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test, and the scores are distributed to their teachers to assist them in understanding their student's abilities. In addition, teachers understand the State Core, and students are assessed annually on Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRT).

Teachers have expressed the need to collaborate with each other to develop systems to assess specific DRSLs such as life-long learning, complex thinking, responsible citizenship, and effective communication.

b) To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?

The Visiting Team observed teachers using a limited variety of traditional assessment methods such as quizzes and tests. Certain departments were using performance assessments, projects, and portfolios to a limited degree.

No data was included to show assessments that were connected to the DRSLs or schoolwide standards. The profile showed the results of CRT tests over time, and teachers reported that the faculty discusses the test results once or twice a year. They reported using the data to inform their instruction. The results of the Gates-McGinitie reading test are shared with all staff members for their information in working with students.

In addition, students are assessed on their citizenship, and points are awarded for appropriate behavior. All faculty members support the schoolwide citizenship policy, which supports the DRSL to develop responsible citizenship. Ongoing efforts to create schoolwide assessments will provide valuable information on student learning. Performance assessments used schoolwide can provide additional data. Clarifying the DRSLs and identifying specific measurable indicators will help facilitate schoolwide assessment.

c) To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?

The administration and staff are committed to using available data on student achievement to drive their practice. Currently the assessment design is provided by state tests, with the addition of the reading test used at the school. Schoolwide assessments toward common learning goals have not been developed. The staff understands that using data leads to better instructional decisions.

Leadership for School Improvement:

a) To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?

All of the stakeholders interviewed were pleased and proud of the administrative leadership of Butler Middle School. Students, parents, and faculty continually complimented the leadership team for its vision, dedication, and commitment to student success. The leadership at Butler Middle School extends beyond the administrative team. Many teachers, parents, and students have assumed the responsibility of leadership in departments, the Student Senate, and the School Community Council.

b) To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?

Butler Middle School clearly uses available data to make decisions. The School Community Council meets to make decisions involving the Trust Land funds and the school improvement plan. Data is continually reviewed to make these decisions, and the school staff and one parent on the council work collaboratively to make decisions.

c) To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?

Promoting high standards and student achievement is at the core of the work of the school's administrative team. The administration provides teachers with all available assessment data, and with staff development time to analyze data. Additionally, the administration provides the staff with annual reading diagnostic data

d) To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

Students and staff members credit the administration with providing ongoing vision and support for students. The school climate and culture of Butler Middle School are very positive and student-centered. Schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and designed to support student learning.

e) To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?

The leadership has identified the DRSLs, but has not yet identified all the steps for achieving these goals. The Visiting Team is confident, based on conversations with the leadership, that the allocation and use of resources will align with the school goals.

f) To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?

The administrative team does an outstanding job of recognizing and empowering the school community. The administration continually invites participation and commitment from parents, students, and staff. The administration is to be commended for this continual commitment to the school's vision, and for the leadership for learning that is evident throughout the school.

Community Building:

a) To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?

The Visiting Team saw evidence of community being fostered by Butler Middle School's students, staff, parents, and administration. The school creates and sustains a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team noted that both parents and students desire to build a greater sense of belonging by promoting student activities. It was also observed that the school is willing to address the concerns of all the stakeholders and build positive relationships to enhance school improvement.

The Visiting Team noted that there is a strong desire among the school's faculty, students, parents, and administration to create opportunities for collaborative and interdependent teams to work toward and achieve the desired goals of the school. The Visiting Team also noted a desire to continue to build, foster, and enhance the students' belonging in the school community. It is important to note a feeling of shared governance on the part of parents, faculty, and students achieved through programs such as the School Community Council and Student Senate.

b) To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?

There is significant evidence that the school engages parents and families as partners in the learning process. Communication between the students' homes and the school is regular, two-way, and meaningful. The school is looking at ongoing support for student learning through programs such as Jump Start, and showed evidence of parents; willingness to come into the school and volunteer to support learning. It was noted that work done in the Community Building Focus Group would have a positive impact on student learning. Efforts have been made to reach out to the feeder elementary and high schools—this is an ongoing process and is done at different levels throughout the school.

There is willingness on the part of staff members and administrators to collaborate, but scheduled time has not been set aside to assure that a collaborative effort is ongoing. The Visiting Team noted that parents support the idea of looking at options for creating regular collaborative time. It should also be noted that students desire teachers to make connections between subject areas that could be fostered through collaborative efforts.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

a) To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?

Butler Middle School has created opportunities and supportive systems for individual development, and schoolwide systems for staff members to participate in professional staff development. The staff at Butler is committed to professional development to improve student learning. School-level professional development time is limited, yet teachers are provided with hours for individual development.

The staff appears to be working toward a better understanding of the middle school philosophy and how to improve student learning. The staff has been engaged in professional training that is both personal and school-directed. Some examples of professional development that focus on the desired results for student

learning are the Three R's Workshop, professional reading groups, and in-service classes offered by the district and university. District individual professional development hours, summer teacher retreats, and university classes are available for individual development.

Many of the departments and individual teachers interviewed indicated a desire to continue with department and schoolwide study groups; if time were available, they would like to develop across-the-curriculum strategies to improve student learning and to encourage interdepartmental collaboration.

b) To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?

The school administration at Butler Middle School has planted the seeds of change and development toward a "middle school" concept. Both the faculty and administration appear receptive to change. This has been a gradual process that has taken place over a few years, but the faculty appears to be ready to jump ahead to new challenges if supported by school and district leadership.

The Visiting Team commends the commitment made by the faculty and administration to engage as a community of learners, and recommends that some accommodations be made to allow teachers more time to work together in a collaborative effort toward the improvement of student learning.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Butler Middle School is not accredited by the NAAS. Most public junior/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, but only by the USOE—it is their choice to join the NSSE or not.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

a) To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?

The action plan attempts to align the school's improvement efforts with the school's DRSLs, but specific steps showing how the school will directly implement the DRSLs are not clearly planned. The plan addresses concerns about continuing literacy efforts, the exploration of middle school philosophy,

improving school climate, and implementing technology. All of these areas are important action steps but are not clearly articulated toward student learning. The administration is aware of the recommendation to make revisions in the action plans to more clearly reflect a focus on the DRSLs.

- b) To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?
 - All members of the school staff and School Community Group participated in the development of the school action plan.
- c) How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?

The constant monitoring of student success by the administration, and the use of site-based governance with an active School Community Council to make decisions, is one means of successfully monitoring the action plan. Creating clear goals tied to data and DRSLs will provide a focus so that all stakeholders may more easily identify gaps and provide progress toward the desired outcomes.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- The Visiting Team commends the staff and community for implementing a very effective self-study process. The process included numerous opportunities for parent, student, and staff input. The result of this reflection is an in-depth, candid self-study. The Visiting Team would like to remind the staff that the self-study is the beginning of a journey and a commitment to continuous school improvement.
- The Visiting Team commends the school community for its conscious and diligent effort in creating a positive culture and climate conducive to learning. The Visiting Team recognizes the exemplary work required to be selected as a First Amendment school, and sees that this effort has had a profound impact on students.
- The Visiting Team commends the administration and faculty for the high degree of collegiality and commitment to student success.
- The Visiting Team commends the leadership for providing strong vision, direction, and resources for school improvement.

- The Visiting Team commends the school for its high level of academic achievement, commitment to reading across the curriculum, and monitoring of student progress.
- The Visiting Team applauds the school's efforts toward student learning. The Jump Start program is an excellent program that should be expanded.

Recommendations:

- The Visiting Team recommends some revision of the action plans so that the plan specifies how the school intends to implement its DRSLs. The focus of the action plan should be on student learning and how students will progress in a systematic way toward each desired result. Once the action plans are revised, the focus of next six years will be on defining the indicators for the DRSLs, and how the school will teach and assess them consistently across all disciplines.
- The staff has requested more collaboration and professional learning time. The Visiting Team recommends that that staff prioritize existing time for collaboration and explore alternative schedules that will address both collaboration time for teachers and student needs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that the school community continue its exploration of middle school principles and practices to expand on their efforts to provide developmentally responsive education.
- In the continuing development of the school profile, the Visiting Team recommends that the staff gather, disaggregate, and interpret relevant data on student learning in individual classrooms, departments, and throughout the school.